

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



November 2011

Title I Cooperative

Educational Service Unit 10

Set limits on children's screen time

Television, video games and computers are definitely a part of everyday life. But researchers have found that too much screen time:

- **Leads to poor eating habits** as young adults. Kids who watch TV or play video games for hours on end tend to eat fewer healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains. They consume more snacks, fast food, fried food and soda. One study also found that watching TV commercials about food lead to overeating in some children.
- **Results in less sleep** if kids have a TV or computer in their bedrooms. These children tend to go to bed a half hour later than those who do not. But they get up at the same time—and tired children don't do as well in school.



To avoid these poor outcomes for your child:

- **Set a strict limit** on total screen time. Strive for no more than one to two hours per day—and even less if your child needs to work on improving her grades.
- **Keep TVs, video games and computers** in family areas, not in bedrooms.
- **Be firm** about requiring that schoolwork, chores and exercise come before any screen time takes place.

Sources: Science News, "Children with TVs or Computers in Their Room Sleep Less," Science Daily, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/09/080902102536.htm.



Love, discipline build good self-esteem

As your child moves toward high school and beyond, it's critical for him to have good self-esteem. He needs to feel that he is a competent and capable individual. Research shows that parents can build self-esteem in children with a two-pronged approach:

1. Never put boundaries on your love for your child. Instead:
 - **Make** clear that you love your child as he is.
 - **Spend** time with him and enjoy his company.
 - **Encourage** your child and take interest in his life.
 - **Respect** your child.
2. Always put boundaries on what your child may do. You should:
 - **Be clear** about family rules, including consequences.
 - **Be consistent** when enforcing rules.
 - **Be firm.** Do not back down if your child whines or gets angry.

Source: K. T. Alvy, *The Positive Parent*, Teachers College Press.

Give a lesson in respect

As a parent, part of your job is to teach your child that real respect simply means treating other people nicely. Tell your child to:

- **Be kind** to others—no matter what.
- **Speak** in a way that shows he values the listener. Profanity and talking back are not respectful.
- **Listen.** Be polite. Do not interrupt. Do not use rude body language, such as rolling your eyes.

Source: M. Borba, *Building Moral Intelligence*, Jossey-Bass.

Work today impacts future

The preteen years are when kids begin growing into the adults they'll one day become. They may be breaking away from their parents, but they do take parents' guidance seriously. Studies show that the best way to help your child succeed in school may be to remind her that working hard today has a payoff tomorrow. So, emphasize that doing well in school today will help your child reach future goals.

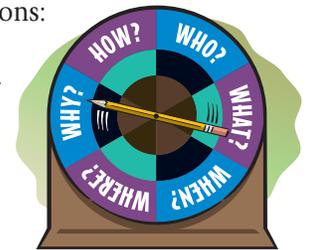


Six questions rev up writing

If your child has trouble figuring out how to start writing a paper, here's how to help: Point out that news stories answer these questions:

who, what, when, where, why and how.

If your child is writing a research paper, answering these six questions can give her basic information. Then she can decide what information is most important and which supporting details are needed.



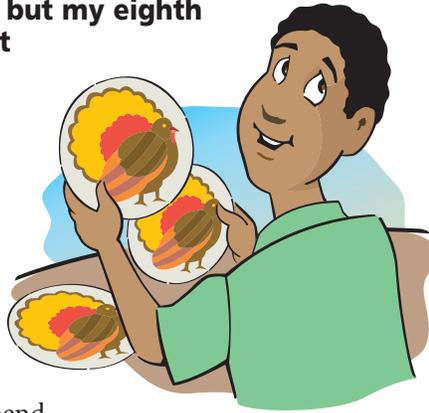


How can parents encourage attendance at family events?

Q: The holidays are approaching, but my eighth grader isn't exactly excited about all the "family time" ahead. Should I make him join us for our traditional family activities?

A: It's important to respect the fact that your child is growing up. So try to be flexible. Rather than demand that he spend every moment with the family this holiday season:

- **Prioritize.** If there's a big event everyone must attend, let him know you understand he wants to spend time with his friends. Skipping family dinner at Uncle Joe's is not an option. Skipping your annual holiday-shopping marathon, however, might be negotiable.
- **Look for new traditions.** Some activities may need to be retired now that your child is older. But rather than abandon them completely, tweak them. Did he used to love decorating the table with leaves and pinecones? Now that he's older and more capable, let his creativity take over to craft an amazing display.
- **Stay positive.** Your child may balk at holiday activities, but it's all part of growing up. He may roll his eyes at these things now. But, chances are, he'll enjoy them with his own kids someday!



Promote more thinking

The smartest kids are thinking kids. That's why teachers encourage creative thinking and problem solving. To make thinking part of your family's daily routine:

- **Brainstorm together.** Hold family sessions where everyone gets to call out ideas—from where to go on vacation, to how to solve a family problem.
- **Take your child's ideas seriously.** Nothing does more for children's mental development than to be listened to and spoken to with respect.
- **Get out and play together**—swimming, hiking, biking, whatever. A healthy, energetic body nourishes an active mind.

Conversations matter!

Kids want—and *need*—to have meaningful talks with their parents. To get the most from the time you spend chatting together:

- **Listen.** Avoid phrases like, "You don't mean that" or, "You can't really feel that way."
- **Don't judge.** Accept your child's viewpoint. Hearing her out isn't the same as agreeing with her. It's a way to show you respect that she has opinions of her own.

Source: T. Apter, *You Don't Really Know Me*, W.W. Norton.



Do you talk about academic honesty?

Research from the Center for Academic Integrity shows that a shocking 75 percent of high school students admit to cheating. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you are addressing this with your child *before* high school starts:

- ___ **1. Do you set** a good example by not cheating in your life?
- ___ **2. Do you talk** about the school honor code?
- ___ **3. Do you discuss** different kinds of cheating with your child? Copying from another student, getting exam questions early, and texting answers to a friend are all cheating.
- ___ **4. Do you talk** with your child about Internet cheating? Copying passages from the Internet and passing them off as your own work is cheating.

- ___ **5. Do you speak** with your child about the consequences of cheating?

How did you do? *Each yes answer means you are showing your child how important it is not to cheat. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

"I would prefer even to fail with honor than win by cheating."
—Sophocles

Planning makes long-term projects more manageable

From science projects to English essays, long-term assignments take careful planning. Remind your child to:

- **Break** the project into smaller parts.
- **Map out** the due dates of every step.
- **Check in** with you. Nudge him back on track if you spot trouble.



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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Erika Beasley. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1021